 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>98</h1>
Chapter:	Placing Children and Youth	
Subject:	Placing Children and Youth In Custody At Home	Page 1 of 2
Approved:	Cynthia Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 6/2/2014
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy No. 98	Dated: 7/1/2013

Purpose

Often, children in custody are placed at home for a trial period before custody is discharged to the parent. This policy provides direction to staff about how long children should continue in custody under those circumstances. It also addresses situations in which both a child in custody and his or her parent may reside with a licensed caregiver.

Introduction

Division staff have a range of options available to address safety issues, including:

- Providing family support services;
- When the authority of the court is necessary to address present, active danger, seeking a CHINS (A) or (B) petition and recommending:
 - conditional custody and/or protective orders imposing certain conditions on the custodial parent while maintaining the child at home;
 - the child be placed in the temporary care and custody of DCF, with placement outside the home.


Because we recognize separating children from their families is traumatic and should be seen as a last resort, the division prioritizes options that do not separate the child from his or her parent.

Policy

Placement of Children in Custody at Home

When a child has been placed in the temporary care of DCF following the filing of a CHINS (A) or (B) petition, it is not appropriate for the child to be placed with the parent whose actions form the basis for the petition. The division will arrange for an appropriate placement (which could be with the non-offending parent or a licensed kin caregiver) until:

- 1) an assessment of the child and family's needs has been conducted;
- 2) a case plan has been implemented which addresses the issues that caused the petition to be filed; and
- 3) the parent has made adequate progress towards the goals of that plan.

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Trial Reunifications

As part of a reunification plan, children may be placed at home in custody for a period of up to 60 days. At the time of the reunification, the social worker will either request a hearing to return custody to the caretaker OR circulate a petition to vacate custody of the child/youth.

If the social worker's judgment is that discharge by the 60th day is not safe or appropriate, the district director may approve an additional 30 days. Any further extension must be approved by the Policy and Operations manager.

For children placed with a parent in a residential treatment program, trial reunification begins when the parent is discharged from the program to live independently. The social worker will not recommend discharge from custody before the completion of a 60 day trial reunification, following discharge.

Parent and Children in Custody Living in Same Licensed Home

At times, it is beneficial for a parent of a child in custody to reside in the same licensed foster or kinship home with his or her child. Such living situations support parent-child attachment and provide the parent with care, support and protection by the child's foster or kinship caregiver.

In such circumstances, the parent is considered a household member in the licensed home and the licensee is the child's primary caregiver. Therefore, the Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit must approve the arrangement before the parent joins the household.

In most cases, during the time that the parent lives in the home, the foster care license will be limited to the child or children in question.

The social worker must plan carefully to ensure the risks that necessitated the child or youth's entry into custody will not cause risk in the home. Ultimate responsibility for the care of the child while in this placement is with the foster or kinship caretaker. The social worker will ensure explicit communication about the role of the parent and the licensed caregiver in providing care and supervision of the child. This should be documented in the case plan.